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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MODESTY AND CLOTHING.

NO ALTOGETHER satisfactory theory of the origin of modesty has been advanced. The naïve assumption that men were ashamed because they were naked, and clothed themselves to hide their nakedness, is not tenable in face of the large mass of evidence that many of the natural races are naked, and not ashamed of their nakedness; and a much stronger case can be made out for the contrary view, that clothing was first worn as a mode of attraction, and modesty then attached to the act of removing the clothing; but this view in turn does not explain an equally large number of cases of modesty among races which wear no clothing at all. A third theory of modesty, the disgust theory, stated by Professor James¹ and developed somewhat by Havelock Ellis,² makes modesty the outgrowth of our disapproval of immodesty in others — “the application in the second instance to ourselves of judgments primarily passed upon our mates.”³ The sight of offensive behavior is no doubt a powerful deterrent from like behavior, but this seems to be a secondary manifestation in the case of modesty; and I hope presently to show that the genesis of modesty is to be found in the activity in the midst of which it appears, and not in the inhibition of activity like the activity of others; and that it has primarily no connection with clothing whatever.⁴

Professor Angell and Miss Thompson have made an investigation of the relation of circulation and respiration to attention,

¹ WILLIAM JAMES, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 435.

² “The Evolution of Modesty,” *Psychological Review*, Vol. VI, pp. 134 ff.

³ JAMES, *loc. cit.*, p. 436.

⁴ Darwin's explanation of shyness, modesty, shame, and blushing as due originally to “self-attention directed to personal appearance, in relation to the opinion of others,” appears to me to be a very good statement of some of the aspects of the process, but hardly an adequate explanation of the process as a whole. (DARWIN, *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, p. 326.)

which advances considerably our knowledge of the nature of the emotions.¹ They say:

When the attentive process runs smoothly and uninterruptedly, these bodily activities [circulation and respiration] progress with rhythmic regularity. Relatively tense, strained attention is generally characterized by more vigorous bodily accompaniments than is low-level, gentle, and relatively relaxed attention (drowsiness, for instance); but both agree, so long as their progress is free and unimpeded, in relative regularity of bodily functions. Breaks, shocks, and mal-coördinations of attention are accompanied by sudden, spasmodic changes and irregularities in bodily processes, the amount and violence of such changes being roughly proportioned to the intensity of the experiences. (P. 45.)

Now, emotions represent psychological conditions of great instability. Especially is this true when the emotion is profound. The necessity is suddenly thrown upon the organism of reacting to a situation with which it is at the moment able to cope only imperfectly, if at all. The condition is one in which normal, uninterrupted, coördinated movements are for a time checked and thrown out of gear. (P. 46.)

And again, in concluding their admirable study:

All the processes with which we have been dealing are cases of readjustment of an organism to its environment. Attention is always occupied with the point in consciousness at which the readjustment is taking place. If the process of readjustment goes smoothly and evenly, we have a steady strain of attention—an equilibrated motion in one direction. The performance of mental calculation is a typical case of this sort of attention. But often the readjustment is more difficult. Factors are introduced which at first refuse to be reconciled with the rest of the conscious content. The attentive equilibrium is upset, and there are violent shifts back and forth as it seeks to recover itself. These are the cases of violent emotion. Between these two extremes comes every shade of difficulty in the readjustment, and of consequent intensity in emotional tone. We have attempted to show in the preceding paper that the readjustment of organism to environment involves a maintenance of the equilibrium of the bodily processes, which runs parallel with the maintenance of the attentive equilibrium, and is an essential part of the readjustment of the psycho-physical organism.

The more motile organisms are constantly, by very reason of their motility, encountering situations which put a strain upon the attention. The quest for food leads to encounters with

¹JAMES R. ANGELL and HELEN B. THOMPSON, "A Study of the Relations between Certain Organic Processes and Consciousness," *University of Chicago Contributions to Philosophy*, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 32-69.

members of their own and of different species; the resulting fight, pursuit, and flight are accompanied by the powerful emotions of anger and fear. The emotion is, as Darwin has pointed out, a part of the effort to reaccommodate, since it is a physiological preparation for action appropriate to the type of situation in question.¹ The strain upon the attention, the affective bodily condition, and the motor activity appear usually in the same connection, and, from the standpoint of biological design, the action concluding the series of bodily activities is of advantage to the organism.

In animal life the situation is simple. Whether the animal decides to fight for it or to run for it, he has at any rate two plain courses before him, and the relation between his emotional states and the type of situation is rather definitely fixed racially, and relatively constant. Even in the associated life of animals the type of reaction is not much changed, and is here also instinctively fixed. But in mankind the instinctive life is overshadowed or rivaled by the freedom of initiative secured through an extraordinary development of the power of inhibition and of associative memory, while, at the same time, this freedom of choice is hindered and checked by the presence of others. The social life of mankind brings out a thousand situations unprovided for in the instincts and unanticipated in consciousness. In the midst, then, of a situation relatively new in race experience, where advantage is still the all-important consideration, and where this can no longer be secured either by fighting or running, but by the good opinion of one's fellows as well, we may look for some new strains upon the attention and some emotions not common to animal life.

I do not think we can entirely understand the nature of these emotional expressions in the race unless we realize that man is, in his savage as well as his civilized state, enormously sensitive to the opinion of others. The longing of the Creek youth to "bring in hair" and be counted a man; the passion of the Dyak of Borneo for heads, and the recklessness of the modern soldier,

¹ The paralysis of extreme fear seems to be a case of failure to accommodate when the equilibrium of attention is too violently disturbed. (See Mosso, *La Peur*, p. 122.)

“seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon’s mouth;” the alleged action of the young women of Kansas in taking a vow to marry no man who had not been to the Philippine war, and of the ladies of Havana, during the rebellion against Spain, in sending a chemise to a young man who stayed at home, with the suggestion that he wear it until he went to the field; and the taunts of the Australian women, three or four of whom, Grey relates, can by their jibes and songs stir up forty men to a pitch of madness against a neighboring tribe over some imaginary wrong—all indicate that the opinion of one’s fellows is at least as powerful a stimulus as any found in nature. To the student of ethnology no point in the character of primitive man is more interesting and surprising than his vanity. This unique susceptibility to social influence is, indeed, essential to the complex institutional and associational life of mankind. The transmission of language, tradition, morality, knowledge, and all race experience from the older to the younger, and from one generation to another, is accomplished through mental suggestibility, and the activity of the individual in associational life is mediated largely through it.

Now, taking them as we find them, we know that such emotions as modesty and guilt are associated with actions which injure and shock others, and show us off in a bad light. They are violations of modes of behavior which have become habitual in one way and another. In an earlier paper¹ I have indicated some of the steps by which approvals and disapprovals were set up in the group. When once a habit is fixed, interference with its smooth running causes an emotion. The nature of the habit broken is of no importance. If it were habitual for *grandes dames* to go barefoot on our boulevards or to wear sleeveless dresses at high noon, the contrary would be embarrassing. Psychologically the important point is that when the habit is set up, the attention is in equilibrium. When inadvertently or under a sufficiently powerful stimulus we break through a habit, the attention and associative memory are brought into play. We are conscious of a break, of what others will think; we anticipate

¹“Sex in Primitive Morality,” AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, Vol. IV, pp. 774 ff.

a damaged or diminished personality; we are, in a word, upset. We may consequently expect to find that whatever brings the individual into conflict with the ordinary standards of life of the society in which he is living is the occasion of a strain on the attention and of an accompanying bodily change.¹

A minimum expression of modesty, and one having an organic rather than a social basis, is seen in the coyness of the female among animals. In many species of animals the female does not submit at once to the solicitations of the male, but only after the most arduous wooing. I shall refer to this again in a later paper, and the following instances will be sufficient in the present connection: "The female cuckoo answers the call of her mate with an alluring laugh that excites him to the utmost, but it is long before she gives herself up to him. A mad chase through tree tops ensues, during which she constantly incites him with that mocking call, till the poor fellow is fairly driven crazy. The female kingfisher often torments her devoted lover for half a day, coming and calling him, and then taking to flight. But she never lets him out of her sight the while, looking back as she flies, and measuring her speed, and wheeling back when he suddenly gives up the pursuit."² There is here a rapid shifting of attention between organic impulse to pair and organic dread of pairing, until an equilibrium is reached, which is not essentially different from the case, in human society, of that woman who, "whispering, 'I will ne'er consent,' consented." In either case, the minimum that it is necessary to assume is an

¹ Without making any attempt to classify the emotions, we may notice that they arise out of conditions connected with both the nutritive and reproductive activities of life, but it is possible to say that such emotions as anger, fear, and guilt show a more plain genetic connection with the conflict aspect of the food process, while modesty is connected rather with sexual life and the attendant bodily habits, and for convenience of treatment I am using the term "modesty" in this restricted meaning.

² GROOS, *The Play of Animals*, p. 285. The utility of these antics is well explained by Professor Ziegler in a letter to Professor Groos: "Among all animals a highly excited condition of the nervous system is necessary for the act of pairing, and consequently we find an exciting playful prelude is very generally indulged in" (GROOS, *loc. cit.*, p. 242); and Professor Groos thinks that the sexual hesitancy of the female is of advantage to the species, as preventing "too early and too frequent yielding to the sexual impulse" (*loc. cit.*, p. 283).

organic hesitancy, though in the case of woman social hesitancy may play even the greater rôle. Pairing is in its nature a seizure, and the coquetry of the female goes back, perhaps, to an instinctive aversion to being seized.

Our understanding of the nature of modesty is here further assisted by the consideration that the same stimulus does not produce the same reaction under all circumstances, but, on the contrary, may result in totally contrary effects. A show of fight may produce either anger or fear; social attention may gratify us from one person and irritate us from another; or the attentions of the same person may annoy us today and please us tomorrow. Mere movement is, to take another instance, one of the most powerful stimuli in animal life, and, if we examine its meaning among animals, we find that the same movement may have different meanings in terms of sex. If the female runs, the movement attracts the notice of the male, and the movement is a sexual stimulus. Or the movement may be a movement of avoidance—a running away; and in this way the female may secure contrary desires by the same general type of activity. Or, on the other hand, not running is a condition of pairing, and is also a means of avoiding the attention of the male. Similarly modesty has a twofold meaning in sexual life. In appearance it is an avoidance of sexual attention, and at many moments it is an avoidance in fact. But we have seen in the case of the birds that the avoidance is, at the pairing season, only a part of the process of working up the organism to the nervous pitch necessary for pairing.

But without going farther into the question of the psychology of wooing, it is evident that very delicate attention to behavior is necessary to be always attractive and never disgusting to the opposite sex, and even the most serious attention to this problem is not always successful.¹ Sexual association is a treacherous ground, because our likes and dislikes turn upon temperamental traits rather than on the judgment, or, at any

¹ Old women among the natural races often lose their modesty because it is no longer of any use. Bonwick says that the Tasmanian women, though naked, carefully avoided indecent postures, but that the old women were not so particular on this point. (BONWICK, *The Daily Life of the Tasmanians*, p. 58.)

rate, upon modes of judgment not clearly analyzable in consciousness. An openness of manner in the relations of the sexes is very charming, but a little more, and it is boldness, or, if it relates to bodily habits, indecency. A modest behavior is charming, but too much modesty is prudery. Under these circumstances, when the suggestive effect of bodily habits is realized, but the effect of a given bit of behavior cannot be clearly reckoned, and when, at the same time, the effect produced by the action is felt to be very important to happiness, it is to be expected that there should often be a conflict between the tendency to follow a stimulus and the tendency to inhibit it, a hovering between advance and retreat, assent and negation, and a disturbed state of attention, and an organic hesitancy, resulting in the emotional overflow of blushing when the act is realized or thought as improper.¹

But however thin and movable the partitions between attraction and disgust, every person is aware of certain standards of

¹ A wholesale unsettling of habit is seen when a lower culture is impinged upon by a higher. The consciousness of other standards of behavior causes new forms of modesty in the lower race. Haddon reports of the natives of Torres Straits: "The men were formerly nude, and the women wore only a leaf petticoat, but I gather that they were a decent people; now both sexes are prudish. A man would never go nude before me—only once or twice has it happened to me, and then only when they were diving. The women, according to my experience, would never voluntarily expose their breasts to white men's gaze; if caught exposed, she would immediately cover her chest or turn around; this also applies to quite young girls, less so to old women. Amongst themselves they are, of course, much less particular, but I believe they are becoming more so, and I have been gravely assured that a man 'can't' (*i. e.*, must not, should not) see a woman's breasts. . . . I have not noticed any reticence in their speaking about sexual matters before the young, but missionary influence has modified this a great deal; formerly, I imagine, there was no restraint in speech, now there is a great deal of prudery; for example, the men were always much ashamed when I asked for the name of the sexual parts of a woman, even when alone or in the presence of one or two men only, and I had the greatest possible difficulty in getting the little information I did about the former relationships between the sexes. All this, I suspect, is not really due to a sense of decency *per se*, but rather to a desire on their part not to appear barbaric to strangers; in other words, the hesitancy is between them and the white man, not as between themselves." (A. C. HADDON, "The Ethnography of the Western Tribe of Torres Straits," *Jour. Anth. Inst.*, Vol. XIX, p. 336.) Bonwick says also: "I have repeatedly been amused at observing the Australian natives prepare for their approach to the abodes of civilization by wrapping their blankets more decently around them and putting on their ragged trousers or petticoats" (*loc. cit.*, p. 24).

behavior, derived either from the strain of personal relationship or by imitation of current modes of behavior. The girl of the unclothed races who takes in sitting a modest attitude, covering herself, perhaps, with her hand, is acting on the result of experience. She may have been often annoyed by the attentions of men at periods when their attention was not welcome, and in this case the action is one of shrinking and avoidance. She doubtless has in mind also that all females are not at all times attractive to all males, that female boldness sometimes excites disgust, and that the concealment of the person may be more attractive than its exposure. This more or less instinctive recognition of the suggestive power of her person and her corresponding attitude of modesty have been assisted also by her observation of the experiences of other women, and by the talk of the older women. I may add the following instances to make it plain that the sexual relation is the object of much attention from both sexes in primitive society, and furnishes occasion for the interruption of the smooth flow of the attention and the bodily activities. Describing the use of magic by the male Australians in obtaining wives, Spencer and Gillen add: "In the case of charming, however, the initiative may be taken by the woman, who can, of course, imagine that she has been charmed, and then find a willing aider and abettor in the man, whose vanity is flattered by the response to the magic power which he can soon persuade himself that he did really exercise." If this attempt at suggestion failed, we should have a case of lively embarrassment in the woman, and her discomfiture would be heightened if the other women and men of the community were aware of her attempt. Similarly on Jervis Island in Torres Straits, "if an unmarried woman desired a man, she accosted him, but the man did not ask the woman (at least so I was informed), for, if she refused him, he would feel ashamed, and maybe he would brain her with a stone club, and so 'he would kill her for nothing.'"²

If we recall the psychological standpoint that the emotions

¹ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 556.

² HADDON, *loc. cit.*, p. 397.

are an organic disturbance of equilibrium occurring when factors difficult of reconciliation are brought to the attention, and if we have in mind that the association of the sexes has furnished so powerful an emotional disturbance as jealousy, it seems a simple matter to explain the comparatively mild by-play of sexual modesty as a function of wooing, without bringing either clothing or ornament into the question. But modesty has, in fact, become so bound up with clothing that it is difficult to think the two apart. I wish, therefore, to examine the conditions in race history which have brought the organs of sex into attention, and to note what forms of attention are favorable to the development of clothing, and what has been the effect upon attention of bringing clothing into a relation with the person.

There is, first of all, a very widespread attention to the male organs of sex at the time of puberty, in connection, generally, with the initiation ceremonies, which fall also at this time. Circumcision is the form which this attention takes for the most part. This is sometimes performed by the boy himself, sometimes by a friend, but generally as a part of the public initiation ceremony; not, indeed, by the priests or medicine men, but by those in charge of the ceremony, or by relatives or guardians of the boy. I think that there can be little doubt that the suggestion of Ploss,¹ carefully developed by Andree,² is correct, that this ceremony is a part of the manifestation of tribal interest in the education and preparation for life of another man and warrior. The boy was at this time admitted to the ranks of the warriors and of the married men; the initiation, in general, marked the completion of his education for manhood, and the circumcision was of the nature of assistance rendered to nature in the completion of his organic preparation for marriage. A similar attention to the growth of young women is seen in the ceremony of laceration, as it occurs, for instance, in Queensland,³ where the women allege that this is the object, and in the ceremony

¹ H. PLOSS, *Das Kind in Brauch und Sitte der Völker*, Vol. I, 368.

² R. ANDREE, "Beschneidung," *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche*, Neue Folge, pp. 166 ff.

³ W. E. ROTH, *Ethnological Studies among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines*, p. 174.

for promoting the growth of the breasts of the girl, which, in addition to laceration, is practiced in Central Australia.¹ This simple type of attention to sex is an expression of a general interest in the activities of life and of reproduction, without any implication of modesty or dress.

Another occasion for attention to the organs of sex and attendant bodily habits is spirit interest in them. As a part of their belief in sympathetic magic, primitive men in many cases thought that they could be contaminated or weakened by the presence of women, and they particularly dreaded the blood of women as a likely carrier of the influence. In his papers on sexual taboo Crawley gives the following instances:²

Amongst the Damaras men may not see a lying-in woman, else they will become weak and will be killed in battle. In Ceram menstruous women may not approach the men lest the latter should be wounded in battle. In some South American tribes the presence of a woman just confined makes the weapons of the men weak. The same belief obtains among the Tschuktschoi, who accordingly remove all hunting and fishing implements from the house before a birth. In the Booandik tribe, if men see women's blood they will not be able to fight. In the Encounter Bay tribe boys are told from infancy that if they see menstrual blood their strength will fail prematurely. . . . Amongst the Maoris, if a man touches a menstruous woman, he becomes *tapu*; if he has connection with her, or eats food cooked by her, he becomes *tapu* an inch thick. Amongst the Pueblo Indians, women must separate from the men at menstruation and before delivery, because if a man touch a woman at those times he will fall ill. An Australian, finding that his wife had lain on his blanket during menstruation, killed her and died of terror in a fortnight.

The spirit element comes out somewhat more clearly in a statement by Tregear of the Maoris: "The walls of a house are sacred. A chief would not lean against a wall, or, indeed, enter a house, if he could help it, except his own. It is said that the walls are made unclean by the Maori women hiding in the clefts the cloth polluted by the menses—this is called *kahukahu*, and engenders the *kahukahu* evil spirits mentioned above;"³ and

¹ SPENCER and GILLEN, *loc. cit.*, p. 459.

² "Sexual Taboo," *Jour. Anth. Inst.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 124. I omit his references.

³ E. TREGEAR, "The Maoris of New Zealand," *Jour. Anth. Inst.*, Vol. XIX, p. 118.

Campbell gives some instances of the relation of sex organs to superstitious practices among the somewhat higher (chiefly the Hindu) religions, and adds :

The belief on this point is a case of the great early religious law, the unwilling is the spirit-caused. To the early man both the local physical and general mental effects of the promptings of the sex appetite imply the entrance and working of some outside spirit. In later religious thought the effects are explained as due to possession by Venuses, Loves, or nymphs. In another view the cause is Satan warring in man's members, or the old Adam goading to sin. Since, therefore, the private parts are great spirit haunts, they can be used as spirit housers. Therefore the private parts are lucky. The belief that the private parts are especially open to spirit attacks seems to be the origin of physical decency. The private parts are kept hid, lest the evil eye or other evil spirit should through them enter the body.¹

In view of this we might well suspect that the first expression of modesty in connection with bodily habits would be found in women, and that the origin of clothing might be found in the efforts of women to cover themselves at those times when exposure of their persons would be particularly dangerous and displeasing to men. Puberty and menstruation are, indeed, the occasion of a large amount of attention to the girl. She withdraws from the camp, or is isolated, because her bodily state is looked on as an illness, and illness is regarded as spirit-caused. She was treated at this time among the natural races essentially as she was treated under the Mosaic law, as unclean, and there can be no question that modesty had a particular development in relation to this fact in the life of woman, but the modesty was not associated with the organs or functions of sex as such, but with a set of superstitions attached to these. And there is certainly no coincidence between the first menstruation and putting on clothes, nor are clothes put on and taken off with reference to any particular periods in the life of woman. The only clear connection, indeed, between menstruation and clothing is that the girl often wears some sign of her marriageability after the first menstruation on her head or body in the way of an ornament ; but this is not specially likely to be worn on the loins, and is in

¹J. M. CAMPBELL, *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXIV, p. 263.

its nature an advertisement of puberty and not a concealment of it.¹ But in many of the lowest tribes the girl wears no clothing either before or after puberty.² There is no reason to believe that menstruation and childbirth were ever sufficient, even in connection with superstitious belief, to cause women to put on clothing; but they were occasions of bringing bodily habits more sharply into the attention, and stimulants both to modesty and to clothing, though the original causes of neither.

It sometimes happens that a people otherwise naked covers the sex organs just sufficiently to protect them from insects. Karl von den Steinen reports that the Trumai Indians of Brazil gather the foreskin over the gland of the penis, and wrap it around with a string and tie it securely; and the neighboring Yuruna cover the gland with a sort of thimble or cornucopia of straw. For the same purpose apparently the Kulishu place the præputium under a string passing around the waist and hold it securely there.³ Waenheldt had previously noticed that the Bororo of Paraguay "bind the glans by means of a fine thread round the belly to protect themselves from insects and be unimpeded in running."⁴ The need of some kind of protection of the sex organs is greater because the natives sit on their hams when resting, thus bringing the pubic region close to the ground, which swarms with insects. Von den Steinen and his companions were annoyed by the bites of insects in just those parts of their persons which the Indians protected. The women wore a covering about the size of two fingers (seven centimeters long and three centimeters wide) attached to two strings passing around the hips and tied around the waist, and a third string passing between the legs. This had the same protective value as the devices of the men, and von den Steinen thinks it was used as a bandage at menstruation, this being regarded as a sickness. These "uluri" of the women were delicately made and ornamented, and

¹ Cf. PLOSS, *Das Weib*, 4. Aufl., Vol. I, pp. 297 ff.

² SPENCER and GILLEN, *loc. cit.*, pp. 460 and 572.

³ KARL VON DEN STEINEN, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens*, p. 192.

⁴ Quoted by v. d. Steinen, *loc. cit.*, p. 193.

obviously had an attractive as well as protective value, but the women showed no embarrassment, but rather astonishment, when von den Steinen asked them to remove them and give them to him. When they understood that he really wanted them, they removed them and handed them to him with a laugh. This is a case in fact where there is a beginning of clothing without a beginning of modesty, the utility aspect of the covering being up to this point alone in consciousness. The case is not different from that of the Fuegian, who wears an otter skin over his shoulders for warmth, but has no covering about his loins.

But the showing-off instinct, expressing itself in the ornamentation and display of the body, has done more than anything else to bring the organs of sex into attention, sometimes by displaying them and sometimes by withdrawing them. The waist, in common with the neck, the wrists, and the ankles, is smaller than the portion of the body immediately below it, and is from this anatomical accident a suitable place to tie ornaments, and the ornamentation of the body results incidentally in giving some degree of covering to the organs of sex. A minimum expression of a connection between ornamentation and sex organs is seen in Australia: "The pubic tassel is a diminutive structure about the size of a five-shilling piece, made of a few short strands of fur-string flattened out into a fan shape and attached to the pubic hairs. As the string, especially at corroboree times, is covered with white kaolin or gypsum, it serves as a decoration rather than a covering."¹ I do not imagine that in this particular case the Australian had in consciousness any connection between this form of ornamentation and sexual attraction. The pubic hairs formed a convenient place to tie the ornament. Photographs of groups of these men show that quite as likely as not the pubic region is not ornamented at all. About half the men in the groups photographed by Spencer and Gillen have this part of the body ornamented or dressed, and an equal number have not. But the sex dances of the Australian tribes are, for our purpose, the most instructive means of attraction

¹SPENCER and GILLEN, *loc. cit.*, p. 572.

which they employ. These dances generally precede the lending of wives and other periodic relaxations to sexual restraint which characterize these people, and which are thought by some students to be conclusive evidence of a previous state of sexual promiscuity. The object of the dances is, of course, sexual suggestion, and the interesting feature to which I refer is the fact that in some forms of the dance the organs of sex are displayed, and in others they are concealed, and with precisely the same suggestive effect. The sex dance of the central Australians described by Spencer and Gillen is an example of the most common general type of this dance: "Each one [of the young women] is decorated with a double horseshoe-shaped band of white pipe clay which extends across the front of each thigh and the base of the abdomen. A flexible stick is held behind the neck and one end grasped by each hand. Standing in a group [before the men] the women sway slightly from side to side, quivering in a most remarkable fashion, as they do so, the muscles of the thighs and of the base of the abdomen. The object of the decoration and movement is evident, and at this period of the ceremonies a general interchange, and also a lending of women, takes place, and visiting natives are provided with temporary wives."¹ In other Australian tribes, at any rate, the men perform a suggestive sex dance, of which the women are spectators, and a similar pairing off follows. In contrast with this, we find that precisely the contrary means is used to produce the same suggestive effect. Bonwick says that the Tasmanian and Australian women wore a covering of leaves or feathers in the sex dance, and removed it directly afterward.² And Roth says of the Queenslanders: "Phallocrypts, or penis-concealers, only used by the males at corrobborrees and other public rejoicings, are either formed of pearl shell or opossum string."³ And again: It is needless to point out that with both sexes the privates are only covered on special public occasions, or when in close proximity to white settlements."⁴ We saw a moment ago in the "uluri" of the Brazilian women a use of clothing without

¹*Loc. cit.*, p. 381.

³*Loc. cit.*, p. 113.

²*Loc. cit.*, p. 38.

⁴*Ibid.*, 114.

modesty, and in this second form of the sex dance we have what may be called an immodest employment of it.

Another suggestive use of clothing is the use of just a sufficient amount to call attention to the person, without completely concealing it. I need not refer to the fact that in modern society this is accomplished by, or perhaps we should better say transpires in connection with, diaphanous fabrics and décolleté dresses, and the same effect was doubtless accomplished by a typical early form of female dress, of which I will give one instance in Australia and one in America: "Among the Arunta and Luritja the women normally wear nothing, but amongst tribes farther north, especially the Kaitish and Warramunga, a small apron is made and worn, and this sometimes finds its way south into the Arunta. Close-set strands of fur-string hang vertically from a string waist-girdle. Each strand is about eight or ten inches in length, and the breadth of the apron may reach the same size, though it is often not more than six inches wide."¹ "A fashionable young Wittun woman," says Mr. Powers, "wears a girdle of deer skin, the lower edge of which is slit into a long fringe, with a polished pine-nut at the end of each strand, while the upper border and other portions are studded with brilliant bits of shell."²

When habits are set up and are running smoothly, the attention is withdrawn; and nakedness was a habit in the unclothed societies, just as it may become a habit now in the artist's model. But when, for any of the reasons I have outlined, women or men began to cover the body, then putting off the covering became peculiarly suggestive, because the breaking up of a habit brings an act clearly into attention. And when dress becomes habitual in a society whose sense of modesty has also developed to a high degree, the suggestive effect is so great that the bare thought of unclothing the person becomes painful, and we have the possibility of such a phenomenon as mock modesty. But, so far as sexual modesty is concerned, the clothing has only

¹ SPENCER and GILLEN, *loc. cit.*, p. 572.

² WESTERMARCK, *History of Human Marriage*, p. 189.

reinforced the already great suggestive power of the sexual characters.

In speaking of the relation of sex to morality,¹ I have already shown that the morality of man is peculiarly a morality of prowess and contract, while woman's morality is to a greater degree a morality of bodily habits, both because child-bearing which is, a large factor in determining sexual morality, is more closely connected with her person, and in consequence also of male jealousy. Physiologically and socially reproduction is more identified with the person of woman than of man, and it has come about that her sexual behavior has been more closely looked after, not only by men, but by women—for it would not be difficult to show that women have been always, as they are still, peculiarly watchful of one another in this respect. This twofold scrutiny of men and women, her own greater sexual responsibility, her greater physiological affectability, and the fact that in the process of wooing she has had to encounter the advances of the sexually more active and sometimes unwelcome male, are responsible for woman's characteristic sensitiveness on the score of her bodily habits.

I fail to find in this study any confirmation of the disgust origin of modesty. We saw a minimum expression of modesty in the courtship of animals, where the modesty of the female was a form of fear on the organic side, but the accompanying movements of avoidance were, at the same time, a powerful attraction to the male. And we have in this, as in all expressions of fear—shame, guilt, timidity, bashfulness—an affective bodily state growing out of the strain thrown upon the attention in the effort of the organism to accommodate itself to its environment. The essential nature of the reaction is already fixed in types of animal life where the operation of disgust is out of the question, and in relations which imply no attention to the conduct of others. If any separation between the bodily self and the environment is to be made at all, it is putting the cart before the horse to make out that modesty is derived from our repugnance at the conduct of others, more immediately than

¹ "Sex in Primitive Morality," *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*, Vol. IV, p. 787.

through attention to the meaning of our own activities. The fallacy of the disgust theory lies, in fact, in the attempt to separate the copies for imitation derived from our own activities from those derived from our observation of the activities of others.¹

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¹ The ethnological example cited by Ellis in confirmation of the disgust view of modesty—that of the embarrassment of the Brazilians when von den Steinen ate in their presence—cannot be regarded as fortunate. I quote his explanation of the custom: “Whenever there is any pressure on the means of subsistence, as among savages at some time or another there nearly always is, it must necessarily arouse a profound emotion of anger and disgust to see another person putting into his stomach what one might as well have put into one’s own.” (ELLIS, *loc. cit.*, p. 138.) Crawley, on the other hand, says that this custom is due to the primitive idea “that the attributes assigned to the individual who is feared, loathed, or despised are materially transmissible by contact of any sort. It is, perhaps, connected in origin with a physiological aversion to contact with that which is unusual or harmful. This transmission of properties can be effected by any method of contagion or infection, and through any detached portion of the organism. In the particular connection of commensality the virus, if it may be so called, is transmitted to food by the touch, and especially by the saliva.” (A. E. CRAWLEY, “Taboos of Commensality,” *Folk-Lore*, Vol. VI, p. 130.) In this view it is *dangerous* to eat with others in public. “In Tanna no food is accepted if offered with the bare hands, ‘as such contact might give the food potency for evil.’ In New Zealand one can be ‘bewitched’ by eating or drinking from the calabash of an ill-wisher, or by smoking his pipe. . . . When a man is sick, he is invariably questioned by the doctor, for example, whose pipe he smoked last.” (CRAWLEY, *ibid.*, p. 137.) Without questioning that fear of contagion is the obvious basis of the habit of eating apart as found in all parts of the world, I am inclined to think that, if we could get back far enough, we should find as a minimum basis of eating apart the mere avoidance of rivals for food, as we see it in animals. But, at any rate, it seems clear that fear, whether in this simple sense or in the more special sense claimed by Crawley, is the immediate basis of the habit, rather than gastric disgust.